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ABSTRACT

This master's thesis assumes that the argument presented in "The American Paradox: Spiritual Hunger in an Age of Plenty" (D. G. Myers) is correct. The United States presently suffers from a social recession arising from the impoverishment of the human spirit. The thesis diagnoses four underlying causes of U.S. social ills: (1) science; (2) regime; (3) cultural attitudes toward teachers; and (4) a misunderstanding of the nature and purpose of education. The cumulative effect of these factors makes it impossible for public school teachers to do their job. Among the suggestions to solve this dilemma include striking the separation of church and state clause from the First Amendment. Only then will it be possible to establish the conditions necessary for the cultivation and preservation of the ideal teacher of the future. Without ideal teachers good schools are impossible. They are important instruments for restoring society by their potential to create citizens who are not only the best on the basis of virtue but also in relation to the U.S. regime. The thesis employs the classical research method, sometimes called the "Great Books" approach, to support and clarify arguments. (Contains 40 references.) (BTU)

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THE AMERICAN TEACHER AND THE RESTORATION OF SOCIETY

by

CHRISTOPHER D. MARSH

SO 033 808

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ABSTRACT

I assume David G. Myers' thesis is correct, that America presently suffers from a "social recession" arising from the impoverishment of the human spirit, and diagnose four underlying causes of America's social ills: science, regime, cultural attitudes toward teachers, and a misunderstanding of the nature and purpose of education. The cumulative effect of these factors make it impossible for a public school teacher to do his or her job. Among the solutions, I propose striking the "separation of church and state" clause from our First Amendment, for only then will it be possible to establish the conditions necessary for the cultivation and preservation of the ideal teacher of the future, without whom good schools are impossible, and who will be an important instrument for restoring society, by his potential to create citizens who are not only the best on the basis of virtue, but also in relation to the American regime.

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PREFACE

This is a traditional, philosophical essay dealing with the fundamental problems which plague our public school system, and American society as a whole. I have used the classical research method, sometimes called the "Great Books" approach, to support and clarify my arguments. This approach I justify as follows:

1) These men were among the most intelligent, perceptive, insightful, best-educated and influential people who ever lived;

2) Generally speaking, they wrote what they thought, irrespective of consequences, and are thus freer than most from the constraints of expediency which compromise truth;

3) Although we are free to be ignorant of Plato and Rousseau, for example, we are not free to live as if they never existed.

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Dis te minorem quod geris, imperas:
Hinc omne principium; huc refer exitum.

HOR.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The others having dropped the ball, the American public school has been called the institution of last resort, but it also has failed, as an organ within a dying body politic. Our political system has failed to defend against the relentless assault of science, or adequately safeguard against the dangers inherent in every democracy, and America now suffers from a multitude of social ills described by David G. Myers in The American Paradox: Spiritual Hunger in an Age of Plenty. These social ills, however serious, are but effects of systemic causes. The underlying causes must be removed before we can even hope to have good schools. Only then will it be possible to establish the conditions necessary for the cultivation and preservation of the teacher of the future, without whom good schools are impossible, and who will be an important instrument for restoring society, by his ability to create citizens who are not simply the best on the basis of virtue, but also in relation to the regime.

The problems which plague our schools are symptoms of a diseased civilization, and the best way to treat a symptom is to cure the disease. But the first stage is diagnosis.

CHAPTER II

THE PROBLEMS

The Root Causes of America's Social Recession: Science and Regime

In his book, Myers presents a good case for his contention that America, although materially wealthy, is languishing in a "social recession," arising from the impoverishment of the human spirit. Adducing much statistical evidence, Myers shows that American society is characterized by "radical individualism" and materialism, accompanied by culturally high rates of divorce, depression, violence, incivility, and teen suicide. Myers is correct in his assessment that these things warrant serious concern, implying they may be harbingers and causes of the beginning of the end of the American political experiment.

Causation has always been more difficult in the social sciences than in the physical sciences, and while Myers does a commendable job within the scope of his project, he does not dig deeply enough to uncover the fundamental causes of his "social recession," of which there are really only two: science and our regime. I begin with the former.

Science

Scienza Nuova

In 1543 Copernicus published his De Revolutionibus, a treatise so specialized and mathematical that few besides a technically proficient astronomer can understand anything after Book 1 (Kuhn, p. 134). But within this work of technical and textual obscurity is the idea that the sun is a star and the earth one of a number of planets revolving around it. This simple concept, ostensibly a theoretical model to solve "the problem of the planets" inadequately addressed by Ptolemy and his successors, initiated what Thomas Kuhn calls "The Copernican Revolution." Simply stated, this "revolution" pulled the earth out from beneath our feet.

From the Middle Ages through the time of Copernicus, Western man was secure in his knowledge of his place in the universe. From an assimilation of ideas from Aristotle, the Bible, and, later, Aquinas, the Roman Catholic Church which dominated Western civilization taught that the earth was stationary and at the center of a finite universe, a stage upon which the actions of man were judged by a concerned Creator. Man enjoyed a privileged position, not only on center stage of God's creation, but also on its hierarchy, as a unique and special creature, apart in kind from the animals.

Science as we know it was not born until 1609, when Galileo first turned his telescope toward the moon. What he saw was a rough-hewn surface characterized by craters, mountains and shadows, and he concluded that the moon was similar in some ways to the earth. Although this may not appear very significant, what Galileo saw contradicted everything the authorities of the day said. According to Bryan Appleyard, Galileo saw "the impossible." For "the entire culture from which Galileo sprang was based upon the 2,000-year-old certainty that the moon, like all else in the heavens, could not be like the earth" (Appleyard, pp. 16-17). *Scienza Nuova*, or the "new science," began with Galileo believing what his eyes told him, by his trust in individual human reason over the traditional authority of the Church, and his invention of the scientific perspective -- the idea of a detached, impartial observer upon an objective external world (Appleyard).

The science which existed before Galileo is more properly called "wisdom," and it differed in every respect from that which ruled after 1609. Its foundation "was neither observation nor experiment, but authority understood through reason. And it was inseparable from that vast edifice of explanation, the Roman Catholic Church" (Appleyard, p. 18).

As *Scienza Nuova* matured, Bacon nurtured it with Aristotelian empiricism combined with "the acceptance of the modern view that we cannot simply reason our way to the truth. Experiment and observation are also required" (Appleyard, p. 48). Descartes, rightly called the

first modern philosopher, provided the "new science" with its rules and script (Appleyard, p. 47). He published his Discours de la Methode in 1637, four years after the trial of Galileo, and the Meditations in 1641. With these works Descartes introduced the ideas of hyperbolic skepticism, the disembodiment of mind, and "the reduction of God to the status of a guarantee that the gaps in rational argument can be filled" (Alasdair MacIntyre). And when later philosophers stressed the lack of necessity of God to the argument, scientific man was left stranded on the farther shore of skepticism (Appleyard, p. 57).

Thus, in Appleyard's eloquent words, science "trapped us all in our private reasons. It divided us from the world, locked us in the armored turrets of our consciousness. Outside was an alien landscape which was either illusory or meaningless, inside was the only possession of which we could be sure -- the continual, anxious chattering of our own self-awareness. Our souls were removed from our bodies" (pp. 56-57).

Although Galileo lost the battle to traditional authority, he won the war. Copernicus took away our privileged place in the universe, Descartes our certainty. This "humbling of man" was continued by succeeding scientists: Darwin took away our conception of ourselves as unique and special creations of a benevolent God, and after Hutton, we were not only lost in space, but lost in time. Finally, Freud took away even our mastery of our minds (Appleyard).

I define "science," therefore, as "the procedures and body of knowledge that sprang from the innovations -- technical and intellectual -- of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries" (Appleyard, p. 245), the view that "there is an objective world outside ourselves which is completely accessible to our observation and reason" (Appleyard, p. 132). I assert that science is a specialized type or subset of human reason, that it is human reason in its purest form, since science attempts to be perfectly objective and impartial and entirely exclude emotions and values. Therefore, what can be said of science can also be said of human reason, with this important note: that the converse of this proposition is invalid. And, finally, I preserve within the definition

that which prevailed up to 1900 -- sometimes called "classical science" -- since many, if not most, scientists retain an essentially classical outlook: that science is the path to truth (Appleyard, p. 245).

Rationalism

Another term which needs defined is "rationalism," since I contend that science grew out of it. By "rationalism," I mean a faith in human reason.

Appleyard says America "has had to abandon the role of the state as spiritual provider" (p. 13). Although this is correct, it does not mean that the modern liberal state does not have an official religion. I agree with Walter Lippmann that a state religion exists in the United States, and that it is the religion of reason (p. 54).

In Colonial America, most of the states had established religions. In Virginia, for example, the state religion was Anglicanism. But Thomas Jefferson disestablished the religion of his state with his Statute for Religious Freedom, which eventually found expression in the First Amendment to the Constitution. According to Lippmann, Anglicanism had "a creed as to how the world originated, how it is governed, and what men must do to be saved," and that "this creed was a revelation from God" (p. 53). But after Jefferson, "officially [Virginia's citizens] had to believe that human reason and not divine revelation was the source of truth" (Lippmann, p. 57).

Now, few would disagree that a collective belief in divine revelation as the source of truth constitutes a religion, as with Anglicanism, but what of a collective belief in human reason as the source of truth?

Lippmann points out that it is the nature of human reason to regard the conclusions to which it arrives as tentative. So we can never fully trust the conclusions reached by reason. Therefore, as Lippmann says, it requires "faith to believe that reason, though never wholly successful, will at last conquer reality" (p. 57). Thus, since faith is a defining characteristic of a

religion, and since reason, like religion, presumes to explain reality, there exists a religion of reason.

Science, as the purest offspring of rationalism, enjoys uncontested the highest place within the religion of our country. Science is the holiest form of rationalism, and scientists are our priests (Appleyard). Science is the authoritative element of rationalism, its guiding force.

One way science serves rationalism is by providing it with a system of morals. According to Appleyard, "Science, with its denial of meanings and purpose as scientific issues, can be seen as the opposite of religion. But the way it turns this denial into the social and ethical system of liberalism means that it behaves like a religion" (p. 245).

I have therefore established that the United States has an official religion, and that it is rationalism, in which science holds the highest place. So it remains to determine what sort of religion this is.

First, it is clear that no rule in the moral system of rationalism can be regarded as absolute, since reason requires all propositions to be held provisionally. And faced with strong temptation, few will be restrained by a moral imperative they suspect is only temporary, liable to change or disappear as new knowledge is discovered.

Second, the existence of a rule in this morality depends solely upon the argument which supports it. If a man, therefore, as a rational being, is not persuaded by the logic of the supporting argument, he is under no obligation to conform to the rule. But even were he so persuaded, there are few for whom this is sufficient for a change of opinion, let alone motivation for an action toward which one is naturally disinclined, as per Franklin's famous quote, "So convenient a thing it is to be a reasonable creature, since it enables one to find a reason for every thing one has a mind to do" (Franklin, p. 32). Therefore, with the moral system of rationalism, each individual is free to decide for himself which rules, if any, should be followed. But it is difficult to determine how this differs from no moral system.

Third, God will play no part in any moral system which rationalism may provide, since God is beyond the purview of science. Thus, even if the morality is noble and highly beneficial, it will not have much power with the majority, since a morality which lacks God is simply not compelling. Throughout history there have always been exceptions -- a few disciplined Epicureans and Stoics, a few "pure and disinterested spirits" among the scientists and academics -- but these unusual men constitute a "trifling minority" (Lippmann, p. 62). According to Lippmann, for "the great humdrum mass of mankind" "the moral life is due not to the acceptance of a set of rules but to a transformation of the will" (p. 62). And for most people this transformation requires submission to a divine will (Lippmann, p. 61), not simply "something greater than one's self," an expression with currency these days. Indeed, when challenged, the Modernist in Lippmann cannot produce a single example from all of human history of a "popular morality" "which has not had some sort of supernatural sanction" (p. 62).

Science grew out of rationalism as a refined and potent form of human reason, and it has proven an extremely successful species. As Appleyard notes, science cannot "coexist with alternative explanations of belief systems" (p. 10). This he convincingly demonstrates in the case of the Western doctor and the primitive tribe. Moreover, he asserts that this happens "when [science] competes with other systems within a single nation" (p. 10), science proving so extraordinarily effective in comparison to these other systems.

Science "is spiritually corrosive, burning away ancient authorities and traditions" (Appleyard, p. 9). This is due not only to science's devastating effectiveness, but also its basis of authority, for science settles all questions at the tribunal of human reason, whereas Protestantism, for example, relies upon that of divine revelation (Lippmann, p. 56). When science damages the claims of a religion, it also undermines its source of authority, for reason, as has been stated, holds everything in doubt, and doubt, according to Lippmann, is the negation of faith (p. 65).

Thus, science cannot provide a compelling morality and disposes of any competing belief system which is based on tradition, myth, received opinion, poetic feeling, or divine revelation. It is no surprise, therefore, that, as the religion of the state, rationalism leaves citizens in a "bewildered quandary" (Appleyard, p. 13) and perpetual state of unease, in which the comfortable prejudices and fictions we need to live are under constant pressure. For "science is not neutral, it invades any private certainties we may establish as a defense against the bland noncommittal world of liberalism. It saps our energy" (Appleyard, p. 13).

Appleyard states, "At any one time scientific man can only regard his knowledge as provisional because something more effective might come along" (p. 10). Here the expression "scientific man" may be replaced with "American citizen," since, privately, an American citizen can believe anything he wants, but publicly, as a *citizen*, he must regard his knowledge as provisional (Lippmann, pp. 53-54), since the official religion of his country is rationalism.

But Lippmann teaches that "the common people hate reason, and that reason is the religion of an elite" (p. 56). This religion requires faith, but Lippmann thinks "more faith than the ordinary man can feel" (p. 57). He says most men

> cannot endure not being confident of their conclusions. . . . [They] have no time for speculation. They have too many immediate worries. Ideas are of no use to them unless they provide means of dealing with the things that worry them. They feel insecure. They have to make a living, and they are constantly menaced by this and that, by drought and plagues, by wars and oppressions, by disease and death. An easy and tolerant skepticism is not for them. They want ideas which they can count upon, sure cures, absolute promises, and no shilly-shallying with a lot of ifs and perhapses. The faith of the people is always hard, practical, and definite. And that is why your religion of reason is not for them. (p. 58)

Thus, our state religion requires more faith than most of us are capable of, but nonetheless affects us with the considerable force only a religion is capable of exerting. We are indoctrinated in science by our media, high schools, universities and other institutions. Its trappings, the products of technology -- the practical application of science -- are ubiquitous. Propagandists like Bronowski, Hawking, and Sagan praise science and celebrate its accomplishments without

the appearance of being offensive or misleading (Appleyard, p. 2). The result of the pervasive influence of science, according to Appleyard, is to make "it progressively more difficult to sustain either a morality or a spiritual conviction" (p. 11). Science is thus a fundamental cause of the "social recession" described by Myers. The other is our system of government.

The American Regime

Allan Bloom notes in The Closing of the American Mind: How Higher Education Has Failed Democracy and Impoverished the Souls of Today's Students that today's university students seldom argue about the adequacy of our present political system, and almost universally accept unquestioningly the freedom and equality upon which our society is based. No longer are there debates on the merits of other regimes, such as monarchy or aristocracy. All agree that the American political experiment is far superior to anything that came before. Yet the ultimate success of a "democratic republic" was never a foregone conclusion.

Our form of government, though sometimes called an "indirect" or "representative democracy," is obviously not a democracy in the Greek sense of the word. For both Plato and Aristotle, democracy is characterized by "freedom" and "equality," but with important qualifications. Their "freedom" is more extreme than what we enjoy, and by "equality" they mean, primarily, equality of political opportunity, e.g., the opportunity for all citizens to directly vote on all issues in the Assembly, and election to office by lot rather than vote. And, of course, their political model was the Greek *polis*. But despite the differences, the similarities are too close for us not to examine what the Greeks thought about democracy, not to mention that our regime derives to a large extent from theirs', Athens' in particular.

Plato understood democracy and considered it one of the four "imperfect" types of society, with timarchy, oligarchy and tyranny. Indeed, according to Plato, pure democracy arises from the corruption of pure oligarchy, due to the oligarchs' excessive greediness, which causes them to neglect and exploit the young of their society. A democracy, in turn, evolves into a tyranny, but

in its final stages of corruptness Plato notes that "The teacher fears and panders to his pupils, who in turn despise their teachers and attendants; and the young as a whole imitate their elders, argue with them and set themselves up against them, while their elders try to avoid the reputation of being disagreeable or strict by aping the young and mixing with them on terms of easy good fellowship" (Republic, 563a-b).

As per Plato, the authority of our teachers is undermined. They feel pressure to feign interest in the trivial concerns of their students, e.g. "Who are you going to the prom with?" Our teachers are reluctant to insist on what they know to be best, for fear of students reporting back to permissive parents or unsupportive, politically-minded school administrators. And when a teacher orders a student to do something for which the student doesn't comprehend the reason, an argument often ensues, and obedience depends upon the teacher *explaining* to his students *why* he should comply.

Aristotle considered democracy as a "deviation" from the "correct" regime of polity. The latter, though not clearly defined, contains a "middling element," or middle class, which serves as a stabilizing force in the regime by being large and powerful enough to offset the political ambitions of the many poor and the few rich. Pursuant to his decision to treat political relationships as a science (*techne*), with the goals of completeness and comprehensiveness, Aristotle identified not simply democracy, or oligarchy, per se, but many different democracies and oligarchies, each corresponding to the proportional "preeminence" of the different parts which compose every society, these elements being, among others, the households, the poor, the rich, the "middling," the armed, the unarmed, the farmers, the merchants, the "warriors," the "vulgar" and the "notables" (Politics, 1289l26-1290al13). Thus, according to Aristotle, a democracy can be more or less aristocratic, according to the relative preeminence of the "notables" in the society.

At the risk of presumption against *'l maestro di color che sanno*, I believe Aristotle would characterize our regime as having been originally a "better sort" of democracy, one "based on law" in which "a popular leader does not arise, but the best of the citizens preside" (Politics, 1291b140-1292a19). But I think he would say that, over the more than two centuries since its founding, our regime has evolved from a more aristocratic democracy to a less aristocratic democracy, corresponding to the gradual loss of "preeminence" of the "notables" over the other elements of society, which lost out to the "middling" and the "merchant" classes, in particular.

When our regime was first instituted, the beliefs and traditions of the Old World were very much alive, and it was against some of these that our Founding Fathers reacted. Indeed, not a few of the Founders were aristocrats in the traditional sense, landed, with servants and slaves who labored to support their privileged lifestyles, giving them leisure to read, think, and write. But such a lifestyle was not to be institutionalized in the new republic, and the Founders wrote clauses into their constitution which discouraged aristocracy. In particular, they abolished titles and state religion, primogeniture and entail having been done away with during the Revolution. And, until very recently, we were able to tolerate such discouragements to aristocracy as "the marriage penalty" tax and high estate taxes, things which our aristocratic forebears would have called "outrages."

But history and human nature are hard to shrug off, and aristocratic ideas continued to play an important part in American political life after the founding. On four occasions, pairs of American presidents have been related: John Adams and his son John Quincy Adams; William Henry Harrison and his grandson Benjamin Harrison; Theodore and his cousin Franklin; and George Bush and his son George W. And it is still not unusual to find congressman, senators and governors who have family ties to previously elected officials. The Kennedys serve as example. Yet all this is but a poor remnant of a political relationship which was dominant throughout Western history -- the political rule of "certain persons who are preeminent on the basis of

family and claim not to merit equal things on account of this inequality: they are held to be well-born persons, to whom belong the virtue and wealth of their ancestors" (Politics, 1301b11-4).

Thus, there is today little left of the aristocratic element of our regime, and an almost complete ascendancy of the middle class and their values. Alongside this tyranny of the bourgeois, there is what contemporary scholars call "radical individualism," as if they discovered it, but which was clearly understood by Plato as the biggest danger of a democracy. In the Republic, he makes much of the idea that a democracy is characterized by "the greatest variety of individual character," and that it's a "wonderfully pleasant way of carrying on," but only in the "short run" (557b-558a). Plato says "an excessive desire for liberty at the expense of everything else is what undermines democracy and leads to the demand for tyranny" (562c). Indeed, along with enslavement to public opinion, this tendency toward so-called "radical individualism" is the main reason why both Plato and Aristotle consider democracy as inherently flawed.

The idea of aristocracy in our culture is now relegated to the land of cat food and Jaguar commercials. Yet the existence of these ads proves that there is still something within the American character which responds positively to such outdated notions as gentility, leisure, and education. The recent popularity of films based on the novels of Charlotte Bronte and George Eliot, with their portrayals of the lifestyles of Victorian aristocrats, further illustrates this.

While some may delude themselves to the contrary, with their money and leather-upholstered motor carriages, the lifestyles of even the wealthiest Americans have little in common with the way of life portrayed in Sense and Sensibility. Although wealth and aristocracy usually accompanied one another throughout history, wealth has never been a necessary condition for an aristocrat, let alone a sufficient one. Indeed, the true aristocrat was above such mundane concerns as money, and, historically, the ideal among true aristocrats was to avoid the inclusion of such a "common" topic from "polite conversation," as being a thing beneath them.

Yet the relation between wealth and aristocracy has always been strong, and, until recently, wealthy Americans often assumed the aristocratic trappings of the past: education, manners, a sense of decorum, and a paternal attitude toward the multitude. Andrew Carnegie was an author, art collector, and philanthropist. H. C. Frick, less deluded and more honest than his business partner, was nevertheless an art collector, and when he wasn't working (which was rare), lived in the grand style of a gentleman in a mansion with sculpture, paintings and a library. And both men vacationed in such places as a Scottish castle and the infamous South Fork Hunting and Fishing Club. Yet they were aristocrats only in their minds, which Frick understood at the end of his life when he told Carnegie he would see him in hell.

Carnegie and Frick tried to exemplify an historical type; today's millionaires and billionaires don't even know how to make the attempt. Those I've personally known are indistinguishable from the bourgeois. These people possess ambition, business acumen, the "Protestant work ethic," and, of course, money, but lack the education and manners of even an Andrew Carnegie. They can't recognize the Homeric allusions in the "foolish speech" given by Gabriel in The Dead, let alone compose such a thing for their own boorish dinner parties. And while they can afford to tour the great museums of Europe, they don't understand what they're looking at.

So, what is an aristocrat, if not person who lives in a big house and drives a fancy car? The word literally means "power of the best," but its referent is complex with ambiguities and contradictions. The aristocrat was frequently discussed by the philosophers of ancient Greece, pertaining to their emphasis on virtue and quest for what constitutes the good life, and is a major, though frequently overlooked, theme in Western literature.

True aristocracy, according to Aristotle, is "the regime that is made up of those who are the best simply on the basis of virtue, and not of men who are good in relation to some presupposition . . . for only here is it simply the case that the same person is a good man and a

good citizen, while those who are good in others are so in relation to their regime" (Politics, 1293b11-8). For Aristotle, this -- not the polity, as some say -- is the theoretical best of all possible regimes. Of the six fundamental practicable regimes, he considers (practicable) aristocracy, along with kingship and polity, "correct" regimes, as well as, in addition, certain "harmonious" and "finely mixed" blends. And Plato's ideal regime, the "republic," may be described, albeit simply, as an aristocracy of philosophers.

One of the greatest literary works dealing with the theme of aristocracy is the novel, The Memoirs of Barry Lyndon, Esq., by William Makepeace Thackeray, published in 1844. Here Thackeray hearkens back to the second half of the previous century, making a deliberate attempt to write in the style of the popular fiction of the time, and Henry Fielding, in particular, whom he greatly admired. Barry Lyndon is a fictional autobiography of a man who considers himself a "gentleman of quality and fashion," although, in reality, his claims had tenuous legitimacy, Barry having been being born into the petty Irish gentry. This, however, doesn't stop Barry from assuming aristocratic "airs" and insisting to anyone who will listen that he is "the descendant of the kings of Ireland" (Thackeray, p. 68). Early on, Barry informs his reader, "I never had a taste for anything but genteel company, and hate all descriptions of low life" (Thackeray, p. 62). And through his will, persistence, machinations, natural talents and bravery, he finally gains admittance into polite society, living as "a gentleman of leisure" in a huge English country estate with a beautiful young countess as wife. Never mind that Barry was a "rogue" and a "scoundrel," considered by the other nobility as "a common opportunist."

In the motion picture by Stanley Kubrick, Lord Wendover, from whom Barry was attempting to secure a title, explains to him what an aristocrat is: "My friends are the best people. Oh, I don't mean that they're the most virtuous -- or, indeed, the least virtuous -- or the cleverest, or the stupidest, or the richest, or the best-born, but the best." Despite their humorous quality, these lines provide, I think, ultimately, a good definition of an aristocrat. As unsatisfying

as this definition is, the loss of the "preeminence" of this sort of person is at the very root of our "social recession."

Aristotle writes, "For whatever the authoritative element conceives to be honorable will necessarily be followed by the opinion of the other citizens" (Politics, 1273a139-41), and this has been called his greatest political insight. Throughout much of European history, the "authoritative element" was composed of the land-owning nobility and the clergy of the state religion of each country, and represented a perpetuation of a time-honored system of values to the people, even when individual nobles, bishops, and even kings were seen to flout them. And despite an abundance of the latter down through history, the people generally subscribed and submitted to the system because they perceived a general agreement about what should be represented. No such perception exists today. And gone is the agreement and tension which existed between the church, which represented religious piety and virtue, and the temporal powers of the state.

Historically, the role of the true aristocrat (of which there were many, but few appear in history books) was to exemplify virtues of honor, bravery, justice, grace, modesty, Christian piety, education, loyalty, military prowess, courtesy, and generosity toward the disadvantaged. His proper function was not to live at society's expense, but rather to "set the example" and give the common people a role model and something to admire. The true aristocrat offered the common people a vision to lift them out of their daily toils and mundane lives. The true aristocrat offered the people a concrete example of beauty and virtue in a world of suffering and death.

Regarding state support of the aristocrat, Edmund Burke, the father of modern conservatism, writes:

> [Those who are convinced of God's will] think some part of the wealth of the country is as usefully employed as it can be, in fomenting the luxury of individuals. It is the public ornament; it is the public consolation; it nourishes the public hope.

> The poorest man finds his own importance and dignity in it, whilst the wealth and pride of individuals at every moment makes the man of humble rank and fortune sensible of his inferiority, and degrades and vilifies his condition. It is for the man in humble life -- and to raise his nature, and to put him in mind of a state in which the privileges of opulence will cease, when he will be equal by nature, and may be more than equal by virtue -- that this portion of the general wealth of his country is employed and sanctified. (p. 7)

Again and again, Aristotle warns aristocrats against any appearance of arrogance toward those beneath them, and the French Revolution may be seen as a result of a general failure to heed him. After the execution of the King, however, the French people -- who loved Louis XVI to the end -- made several attempts to restore the Monarchy and the Church, such was the compelling power and attraction of the *ancien regime*. Aristocracy survived the French Revolution, but died in World War I, along with so much else.

The authoritative element of our regime should have continued to exemplify the aristocratic virtues which it did at the beginning. But they eroded in proportion to the rising preeminence of the merchant and middling classes. Instead of exemplifying the values of virtue and piety, our government conveys the message that free-thinking, secularism, tolerance, relativism, mercantilism, and money are what it "conceives to be honorable." President Clinton lies, breaks the law and his marriage vows; President Coolidge says, "The chief business of the American people is business"[1] -- the people take their cue from this, as per Aristotle. At best, our founders did not adequately think through the consequences of predicating a political system on Locke's axioms; the abolishment of titles and the so-called "separation of church and state" were ticking time bombs. Guns, gangs, consumerism, drugs, divorce, suicide -- these are merely the symptoms of the terminal stage of a diseased regime.

The failure of our regime to adequately safeguard against the dangers inherent in every democracy and the relentless assault of science thus combine to produce the "social recession"

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[1] Cf. Rousseau: "The politicians of the ancient world were always talking of morals and virtue; ours speak of nothing but commerce and money." (Discourse on the Arts and Sciences, p. 17)

Myers illustrates. According to Nietzsche, science is motivated by a "will to power" far more often than a "will to truth," and because of our ignorance of the fact that science is a convention, a naivete, a simplification, a falsification, a specific choice among competing metaphysics rather than "the privileged road to the truth" (Appleyard, p. 227), we have allowed a specific human type -- variously characterized by Nietzsche as "small-souled," "slavish," "dependent," and "herd animal" -- to gain power over us, and prevail over our very spirits, as Homais over Madame Bovary.

The Greek Legacy

Our culture makes much -- or at least used to -- of the contributions of the ancient Greeks, Athens, primarily. Certainly, we owe them much, as per Shelley's famous quote, "We are all Greeks. Our laws, our literature, our religion, our art, have their root in Greece." But the Hellenic revival within which Shelley wrote tended to emphasize only those aspects of ancient Greek culture which were consonant with its idealized aesthetic vision of the historical (Gaull). Infanticide, pedophilia, and frequent wars between the *polies* were less celebrated, as was the Greek attitude toward the teacher. But our society's attitude toward the teacher owes something to ancient Greece, as surely as do the façades of our banks.

Sparta had a strict rigid tradition of public education, with a single state official in charge (Amos & Lang, p. 161). Children were considered the property of the state. The purpose of a Spartan education was to produce great soldiers. Toward this end, boys were subjected to rigorous physical excercise and severe training designed to innure them to hardship. With our permissive, student-centered schools, "sensitive" to the "needs" of the student, it appears we have chosen to disregard the fact that Montaigne, Rousseau, and other important educational thinkers both admired the Spartan system and were strongly influenced by it.

Sparta's great rival, Athens, on the other hand,

> left the organization in private hands. Although there was probably no law compelling parents to educate their sons at school, it was certainly a strong tradition to do so. The state paid for the schooling of some children, whose fathers had died fighting for the city. There were some laws relating to education: parents had to make sure that journeys to and from school took place in daylight; unauthorized persons were banned from school property in school hours, so that pupils might be protected from bad influences. Otherwise the state did not much interfere. (Amos & Lang, p. 161)

In Athens, the "primary" stage of education for a boy began at about seven and lasted until he was about fourteen years old (Amos & Lang, p. 161). A boy's teacher was called a *grammatistes* (Amos & Lang, p. 161). Of him, Amos and Lang say:

> The teaching of the *grammatistes* must have been extremely dull. He certainly made no deliberate effort to make it interesting. Learning by heart and continual reciting were stock methods. Reading was made more difficult by the fact that there was no punctuation, nor were there any spaces between written words. All reading was aloud, as the Greeks did not practise silent reading. (p. 163)

Figuring prominently in the young Athenian boy's education was not only the *grammatistes*, but the *paidagogos*, from which we get the words "pedagogue" and "pedant":

> The boy was constantly attended by a *paidagogos*, a slave whose duties were to supervise him at home and at school, where he generally sat in on the actual lessons, besides escorting him to and from school, and carrying his satchel. He was responsible for teaching the boy good manners and could cane him if he thought fit. In fact he was an ever-present representative of the boy's father, his owner. Of course, the suitability of such slaves for their job varied widely, and many were not at all suitable. They were generally despised. Pericles, on seeing a slave fall from a tree and break his leg, is reported to have said, 'There you are. He's only fit to be a *paidagogos* now.' (Amos & Lang, pp. 161-162)

In addition to the *grammatistes* and the *paidagogos*, there was what Amos and Lang call the "schoolmaster." They tell us that the status, and often the ability, of the schoolmaster was very low. In addition, the schoolmasters' "pay was poor, and they dared not offend the parents on whom they depended for their fees" (Amos & Lang, p. 162).

Demosthenes gives us an idea of the reputation of the schoolmaster in his speech against his political opponent Aischines: "Your childhood was spent in an atmosphere of great poverty. You had to help your father in his job as assistant teacher -- preparing the ink, washing down

the benches, sweeping out the class-room, and taking the rank of a slave rather than of a freeborn boy . . .". As an added insult, Demosthenes remarks, "You were a teacher. I went to school" (Amos & Lang, p. 162).

Amos and Lang speculate that corporal punishment, which was, of course, accepted as normal, "must often have appeared the only way for a desperate schoolmaster, given little respect by anybody" (p. 162).

As for the education of girls, so far as scholars can tell, "their upbringing took place almost entirely in their own homes. Some managed to learn to read and write, but they did not receive the same formal education as the boys" (Amos & Lang, p. 161). In general, young Athenian girls were taught by their mothers "the skills necessary for running a home -- weaving, spinning and so on -- as well as correct behavior. Whatever they learnt beyond that was picked up by their own efforts. There were certainly those who managed to become cultured and well-informed" (Amos & Lang, p. 161).

Our culture's lack of respect for the teacher -- which, like our language, is part of our Greek cultural inheritance -- is exemplified by the cliche, "Those who can, do. Those who can't, teach. (And those who can't teach, teach gym. And those who can't teach gym, teach teachers.)"

Toward the end of the seventeenth century, John Locke wrote a widely-read and influential treatise on education, Thoughts on Education, which somewhat attempted to reform the traditional image of the teacher, but it was Jean-Jacques Rousseau in the next century who elevated the teacher to his proper position. Indeed, he held the teacher to be so exceptional and extraordinary a person that he doubted one could be found, not only because of the natural abilities and education required, but also the demands of the disciplined life that must be lived:

> There is much discussion as to the characteristics of a good tutor. My first requirement, and it implies a good many more, is that he should not take up his task for reward. There are callings so great that they cannot be undertaken for money

> without showing our unfitness for them; such callings are those of the soldier and the teacher . . . A tutor! What a noble soul! Indeed for the training of a man one must either be a father or more than a man . . . Can such a one be found? I know not. In this age of degradation who knows the height of virtue to which a man's soul may attain? But let us assume that this prodigy has been discovered. (Emile, p. 19)

Along with Plato's Republic, Rousseau's Emile is the most provocative and fruitful book on education ever written. In his Confessions, Rousseau states he considers Emile his greatest work, the result of twenty years of thinking on the subject of education (p. 360) and the synthesis and consummation of the major works which preceded it (p. 523). With them, Emile contributed toward making Rousseau the most influential philosopher of the eighteenth century.

It has been said that we are all children of Rousseau, and, indeed, it was Rousseau who gave us back our childhood. Although Locke in his Thoughts "wanted learning to be an enjoyable process, based as far as possible on interest, and warned against trying to teach children too much before their reason was sufficiently developed" (Jimack, xxvi), it was Rousseau who proposed the unprecedented doctrine that "every stage of human growth -- from birth to adulthood -- is not only valid for future development, but valid in itself. Such is the impact of this doctrine upon educational practice that it seems today mere commonsense" (Back cover of Emile).

Although Rousseau was successful in this regard, as well as in getting mothers to nurse their own babies and release them from the bonds of swaddling clothes (Jimack, xxxix), he was less successful in gaining society's respect for the teacher. There are several reasons for this. First, by Rousseau's own admission, Emile was more a philosophical treatise, like the Republic, and less a practical handbook on education.[2] Second, Rousseau's experience as private tutor was disappointing. Third, he gave all five of his children to an orphanage. And fourth, while

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[2] Cf. Plato: "Does practice ever square with theory? Is it not in the nature of things that, whatever people think, practice should come less close to truth than theory?" (Republic, 473)

education "a la Jean-Jacques" was quite popular for a while, history records that most such attempts were unsuccessful (Jimack, xl; Gaull, pp. 54-55).

But Rousseau -- who was not known for his modesty -- did not even consider *himself* qualified to be a teacher (Emile, p. 20). Never before, or since, has the Western teacher been accorded such respect.

The contemporary American conception of the teacher is, of course, far from what Rousseau had in mind. Today's teachers are shown little respect by students, parents, administration or school board. And in a democratic society, this is not surprising. Indeed, Plato taught that trying to be a teacher in a democracy was an exercise in futility and warned against even the attempt (Republic, 492-494). Like his Greek predecessors, the modern American public school teacher must take care that he does not offend the wrong people, often sacrificing truth, virtue and effective teaching techniques for expediency, enduring a mechanical daily grind of disrespect, insubordination, overwork and unappreciation. A vignette circulating on the Internet expresses a contemporary teacher's despair:

A TEACHER IN THE 21ST CENTURY

"Let me see if I've got this right. You want me to go into that room with all those kids and fill their every waking moment with a love for learning.
"Not only that, I'm to instill a sense of pride in their ethnicity, behaviorally modify disruptive behavior, observe them for signs of abuse and T-shirt messages
"I am to fight the war on drugs and sexually transmitted diseases,
check their backpacks for guns and raise their self-esteem. I'm to teach them patriotism, good citizenship, sportsmanship and fair
play, how and where to register to vote, how to balance a checkbook and how to apply for a job.
"I am to check their heads occasionally for lice, maintain a safe environment, recognize signs of potential anti-social behavior, offer advice, write letters of recommendation for student employment and scholarships, encourage respect for the cultural diversity of others, and, oh yeah, always make sure that I give the girls in my class 50 percent of my attention.
"I'm required by my contract to be working on my own time summer and evenings at my own expense toward advance certification and a master's degree; and after school, I am to attend committee and faculty meetings and participate in staff development training to maintain my employment status.

"I am to be a paragon of virtue larger than life, such that my very presence will awe my students into being obedient and respectful of authority.
"I am to pledge allegiance to supporting family values, a return to the basics, and to my current administration. I am to incorporate technology into the learning, and monitor all Web sites while providing a personal relationship with each student.
"I am to decide who might be potentially dangerous and/or liable to commit crimes in school or who is possibly being abused, and I can be sent to jail for not mentioning these suspicions.
"I am to make sure all students pass the state and federally mandated testing and all classes, whether or not they attend school on a regular basis or complete any of the work assigned. Plus, I am expected to make sure that all of the students with handicaps are guaranteed a free and equal education, regardless of their mental or physical handicap.
"I am to communicate frequently with each student's parent by letter, phone, newsletter and grade card. I'm to do all of this with just a piece of chalk, a computer, a few books, a bulletin board, a 45 minute more-or-less plan time and a big smile, all on a starting salary that qualifies my family for food stamps in many states. Is that all?"
"And you want me to do all of this and expect me not to pray?"

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Written by the Rev. Nelson Price

This state of affairs is an extreme case of cultural idiocy, and we can, in general, say that today's American high school teacher is given little more respect than the poor schoolmaster of ancient Athens.

Education Versus Specialization

Because there is widespread acceptance of the idea that our public schools aren't doing what they should, there is much talk today about "education." Yet most academics, let alone ordinary people, don't know what the word means. For 2,500 years there was a common approach to learning, and it was primarily literary. Herodotus read Pindar, Plato read Herodotus, Plato taught Aristotle, Epicurus read Aristotle, Horace read Epicurus, Seneca read Horace, and all read Homer. This relationship of almost personal connection among living and dead thinkers did not end with the advent of the Christian era, but the Bible usurped the place of Homer. The classical authors, Aristotle and Virgil in particular, acquired much authority among the literate

through the Middle Ages, with Aquinas drawing heavily on the former and Dante following the latter through the Inferno.

All this was common knowledge, but that is my point. Until 70 or so years ago, men received a similar education based on a circumscribed literary tradition. Mathematics, however, was always an important part of education, being a "sister science" to philosophy -- Euclid's Elements was a standard classroom text up to the beginning of the twentieth century -- but the same continuity obtained; Cicero "discovered" the tomb of Archimedes. In the past, therefore, the educated had a common base of knowledge upon which they could draw for their discussions. They were thus able to carry on the dialogue across cultures and centuries which is aptly called "the Great Conversation."

This traditional liberal education served many purposes. In the past, it was the foundation for all the professions, of which there were three: law, medicine, and clergy. But, more importantly, this education was considered requisite preparation for aristocrats, and was often crowned by the "grand tour" of Europe. In America, the Ivy League schools were "the last resorts of aristocratic sentiment within the democracy," and used to "have the vocation of producing gentlemen as well as scholars," but this ended after World War II, in large part due to the egalitarian effects of the GI Bill (Bloom, p. 89).

In the eighteenth century, when science reached its maturity, the physical sciences began to be studied more, but the classical education remained intact. During this time, the "scientist" becomes a more common figure. Benjamin Franklin continues to serve as good example of this type of man: a scientist and inventor, eminently practical -- but still classically educated.

But, early in the so-called Enlightenment, Jonathan Swift understood the nature of science and the dangers it represented, and he satirized scientists in Part III of Gulliver's Travels, "A Voyage to Laputa." At the Academy of Lagado, a parody of the Royal Society, which Swift visited in 1710 (Chalker, p. 356), Gulliver sees a scientist who had spent eight years "upon a

project for extracting sunbeams out of cucumbers, which were to be put into vials hermetically sealed, and let out to warm the air in raw inclement summers." He told Gulliver he "did not doubt in eight years more, that he should be able to supply the Governor's gardens with sunshine at a reasonable rate" (pp. 223-224). Another chamber held a terrible stench, as well as a scientist employed since his first coming to the Academy in "an operation to reduce human excrement to its original food, by separating the several parts, removing the tincture which it receives from the gall, making the odour exhale, and scumming off the saliva. He had a weekly allowance from the Society of a vessel filled with human ordure, about the bigness of a Bristol barrel" (p. 224). To us they are our priests and the shapers of our world, to Swift they are filthy, disheveled men begging money for their worthless projects.

Swift understood the danger that *Scienza Nuova* posed to the classical educational tradition he valued so much, of which he was a recipient, and which he vigorously defended in The Battle of the Books -- in which the ancient ones prevailed over the modern --and elsewhere. He also recognized the wider danger it posed to the traditional order he passionately subscribed to. He did not share the Enlightenment enthusiasm for science, but rather saw it for what it was. After summoning the ghost of Descartes to talk to that of Aristotle, the latter tells Gulliver not only that Descartes' vortex theory is "exploded," but "predicted the same fate to *attraction* [Newton's theory of gravitation], whereof the present learned are such zealous asserters. He said, that new systems of nature were but new fashions, which would vary in every age; and even those who pretended to demonstrate them from mathematical principles would flourish but a short period of time, and be out of vogue when that was determined" (pp. 242-243).

Thus, Swift's understanding of science is consonant with that of Kuhn and Appleyard. And Swift shows he is of the same opinion as Lippmann regarding rationalism and the multitude: Gulliver says, ". . . such constant irreconcilable enemies to science are the common people" (p. 230). Swift saw where science was going, and would not have been surprised at the "Newtonian

killing systems" of World War I (Appleyard, p. 115), and even anticipated the hydrogen bomb and nuclear stalemate, according to Michael Foot (p. 29).

By the latter half of the nineteenth century, Nietzsche had witnessed what Swift anticipated, and he knew from experience (to him, the most important source of knowledge) that "the scientific view is deadly to culture" (Bloom, p. 202) and like Swift, he attacks the scientist. For example, he writes:

> Let us look more closely: what is the scientific man? To begin with, a type of man that is not noble, with the virtues of a type of man that is not noble, which is to say, a type that does not dominate and is neither authoritative nor self-sufficient: he has industriousness, patient acceptance of his place in rank and file, evenness and moderation in his abilities and needs, an instinct for his equals and for what they need; for example, that bit of independence and green pasture without which there is no quiet work, that claim to honor and recognition (which first of all presupposes literal recognition and recognizability), that sunshine of a good name, that constant attestation of his value and utility which is needed to overcome again and again the internal *mistrust* which is the sediment in the hearts of all dependent men and herd animals. (p. 125)

The growing importance of the physical sciences during the eighteenth century was necessarily accompanied by a rise in the study of technical, specialized fields, corresponding to the erosion of "a social order alien to the mercantile spirit" (Janet Adam Smith quoted by Tillotson, G., Fussell, P., Jr., Waingrow, M., & Rogerson, B., p. 13). During this time, the pejorative "virtuoso" was applied to specialists, and, alongside science, specialization also received satirical treatment by Swift in Gulliver's Travels.

The Laputans, who live on a floating island, are theoretical mathematicians, their heads being "all reclined either to the right, or the left; one of their eyes turned inward, and the other directly up to the zenith" (p. 200). These specialists are so preoccupied with their narrow studies that their wives occasionally commit adultery in front of them without being noticed. They aren't interested in anything other than theoretical math, and eat equilateral triangle-shaped meat and "praise the beauty of a woman" by describing it in terms of "rhombs, circles, parallelograms, ellipses, and other geometrical terms" (p. 205). "Imagination, fancy, and invention, they are

wholly strangers to, nor have any words in their language by which those ideas can be expressed; the whole compass of their thoughts and mind being shut up within the two forementioned sciences" (p. 206). Michael Foot notes "how up to date these gentlemen appear" (p. 8).

During the Industrial Revolution in the nineteenth century, the problem of specialization exploded. Toward the end of the century, Nietzsche wrote:

> Sometimes it was the specialist and nook dweller who instinctively resisted any kind of synthetic enterprise and talent; sometimes the industrious worker who had got a whiff of *otium* [leisure] and the noble riches in the psychic economy of the philosopher which had made him feel defensive and small. Sometimes it was that color blindness of the utility man who sees nothing in philosophy but a series of *refuted* systems and a prodigal effort that 'does nobody any good.' (p. 122)

According to Nietzsche, these "specialists" and "nook dwellers" occupy a low place on the natural "order of rank," and he laments "how utterly our modern world lacks the whole type of a Heraclitus, Plato, Empedocles, and whatever other names these royal and magnificent hermits of the spirit had" (p. 123). For Nietzsche, the philosopher must attain "his proper level, the height for a comprehensive look, for looking around, for looking *down*" (p. 124). For Nietzsche, "Facing a world of 'modern ideas' that would banish everybody into a corner and 'specialty,' a philosopher -- if today there could be philosophers -- would be compelled to find the greatness of man, the concept of 'greatness,' precisely in his range and multiplicity, in his wholeness in manifoldness" (p. 137).

The reader may object that Nietzsche is here talking about philosophers -- his "philosopher of the future," in particular -- and ask what this has to do with education. To which I answer, everything. For these characteristics of a philosopher, though lacking in most professional educators today, are to be highly desired in our ideal teacher of the future. Some of the greatest teachers who ever lived were philosophers; I can name a few -- Socrates, Diogenes, Rusticus -- but most have been lost to despairing posterity, owing to the low status accorded teachers by our culture. The King of Macedon could have hired whomever he wanted to tutor his son, and, to the

exclusion of the sophists, went outside his kingdom to procure the greatest philosopher in the world.

> It is a strange thing that matters should be at such a pass in this age of ours that philosophy, even with men of understanding, should be looked upon as a vain and fantastic name, a thing of no use, no value, both in common opinion and in fact. I think that the snarled-up reasoning of these ergotists, by taking possession of the avenues unto it, is the cause. It is very wrong to represent it to children as a thing of such difficult access, and with a frowning, grim, and formidable aspect. Who is it that has disguised it thus with this false, pale, and hideous countenance? (Montaigne, pp. 32-33)

Today, we often hear phrases like "specialized education" and "professional training." But "specialized education" is an oxymoron. Accounting, engineering, law, and medical degrees may be practical and useful accomplishments, but none of these signify an education, and never did. And as for "professional training," animals are trained; men are educated. These phrases are the slogans of salesmen trying to sell us a commodity -- and worse, attempting to turn us into one so we can sell ourselves. True education does not pander to the vicissitudes of the marketplace. It deals not with the transitory, but with the eternal.

I have thus tried to set out the underlying problems which prevent us from having good schools. First, science has undermined our religions, invaded our private certainties, and corroded our culture. Second, the American regime has degenerated from a better sort of democracy into a worse sort. Third, ancient Greek culture has contributed to America's low opinion of its teachers. And, fourth, our society is ignorant of what the word "education" means. I turn now to the solutions.

CHAPTER III

THE SOLUTIONS

The Humbling of Science

We have seen how science has humbled man, how it has helped create the "social recession" we are languishing in. In a word, it accomplished this by setting itself up as the privileged road to truth, which it was able to accomplish by its unsurpassed effectiveness. This effectiveness captivated Western culture, or rather the spiritually-low element within it, by appealing to the *useful*, the *practical* -- the very values embodied by Franklin, who is frequently used to symbolize what is best in the American character, but who could not write a poem if his life depended on it.

By appealing to these "herd animal values" (see Nietzsche, pp. 115-117), science was granted the power it enjoys. Science is value-free, so there was nothing inherent in science by which it could promote itself -- as Bloom says, "Reason cannot establish values, and its belief that it can is the stupidest and most pernicious illusion" (p. 194). The power it enjoys was bestowed from without. It did not succeed, we allowed it to succeed; the American wilderness did not "disappear" -- we sold it (Deliverance).

Nietzsche characterizes usefulness and practicality as "plebian tastes" (p. 22). When science appealed to these things, it was appealing to the spiritually-low within our culture, the element concerned merely with what can be seen and felt. Nietzsche associates sensualism, and

thereby empiricism, with the "under souls," and Platonic rationalism with the new aristocracy he envisions. Of physics, which is not a science, but rather *the* science, Nietzsche says:

> Eyes and fingers speak in its favor, visual evidence and palpableness do, too: this strikes an age with fundamentally plebian tastes as fascinating, persuasive, and *convincing* -- after all, it follows instinctively the canon of truth of eternally popular sensualism. What is clear, what is 'explained'? Only what can be seen and felt -- every problem has to be pursued to that point. Conversely, the charm of the Platonic way of thinking, which was a *noble* way of thinking, consisted precisely in *resistance* to obvious sense-evidence -- perhaps among men who enjoyed even stronger and more demanding senses than our contemporaries, but who knew how to find a higher triumph in remaining masters of their senses -- and this by means of pale, cold, gray concept nets which they threw over the motley whirl of the senses -- the mob of the senses, as Plato said. In this overcoming of the world, and interpreting of the world in the manner of Plato, there was an *enjoyment* different from that which the physicists of today offer us . . . 'Where man cannot find anything to see or to grasp, he has no further business' -- that is certainly an imperative different from the Platonic one, but it may be the right imperative for a tough, industrious race of machinists and bridge-builders of the future, who have nothing but *rough* work to do. (p. 22)

What can liberate us from these "plebian values" is an authoritative element -- a value-creator in Nietzsche's words -- or, rather, value-affirmer, since the values already inhere in our culture -- who will set a different example, both in word and deed, for the citizens, and represent values other than money, utility, and practicality as the most important ends.

Science used to have ready answers to Pilate's rejoinder, and while it has of late been a little more cautious before answering, nevertheless retains its pride and airs, covertly insisting that it alone can offer us truth. But what "truth" does science offer? That we are meaningless accidents in a brutally cold, uncaring universe? Is this the truth? Maybe. It is surely the impression science has imparted to us. But on what is this impression based? The cumulative effect of multiple scientific theories. Yet scientific theories are interpretations, and, as such, subject to the messy complications of different perspectives; according to Nietzsche, "It is perhaps just dawning on five or six minds that physics, too, is only an interpretation and exegesis of the world (to suit us, if I may say so!) and not a world-explanation" (p. 21). Nietzsche writes:

> Forgive me as an old philologist who cannot desist from the malice of putting his finger on bad modes of interpretation: but 'nature's conformity to law,' of which you physicists talk so proudly, as though -- why, it exists only owing to your interpretation and bad 'philology.' It is no matter of fact, no 'text,' but rather only a naively humanitarian emendation and perversion of meaning, with which you make abundant concessions to the democratic instincts of the modern soul! (p. 30)

Where are Newton's Laws, anyway, or if they have been superceded, where are Einstein's? Does $e=mc^2$ exist somewhere in the universe? If not, then in our heads? If so, will Newton's laws still exist after our sun dies? These are tired questions, but they obviously haven't been asked enough.

Now, for the moment, let us admit that the conclusions drawn by science are not interpretations determined by language, culture, and ulterior motives, but are rather theories selected without bias or emotion from a handful of reasonable choices which fit the empirical data (or some such nonsense). But we are now back to the provisional nature of all such theories. According to Kuhn, "The mutability of its fundamental concepts is not an argument for rejecting science. Each new scientific theory preserves a hard core of the knowledge provided by its predecessor and adds to it. Science progresses by replacing old theories with new" (p. 3). Granted, but if we accept this, we must also accept that we will not be able to distinguish this "hard core" of knowledge from the rest until the new theory comes along; therefore we must regard the entire theory as provisional so long as it obtains. But, continuing along this line, since even the latest theories are subject to replacement, we must conclude that we will never know what this "hard core" of knowledge is.

But even if we could, to what extent would it be truth? One of these "hard cores" of knowledge is the "fact" that two unequal masses dropped from the same height above the earth hit the ground at the same time. This "hard core" was preserved in the theories of Galileo through Descartes, Kepler, Newton and Einstein, and we accept it as true. But it is *not* true. The masses do *not* hit the ground at the same time. This is due, of course, to air resistance, which

physicists have always dismissed as a "local condition." The problem is, however, is that there are always "local conditions," and any attempt to ignore them is a "daring simplification" which we have accepted, but which our forebears would have rejected as contrary to common sense (Appleyard, pp. 140-141). Science has conditioned our thinking to conform to its understanding of the world, which "consists of a breaking down of problems into discrete, experimental and observable parts. We acquire our knowledge of the world by seeing Galileo's falling weights as a separate phenomenon from the air pressure which, in reality, gives us a 'false' reading. Equally, we see our own minds as irrevocably separate from the world they attempt to interpret" (Appleyard, p. 179).

And as for this latter, the notion of objectivity, it is one of the best refuted theories there are. "Classical science aspired to see the universe objectively -- that is from a point outside human consciousness and therefore from a godlike position outside the universe -- but there is no such position. It was an illusion, a dream" (Appleyard, pp. 176-177). So, from the beginning science has been operating on an assumption that was flawed, and on this basis alone we can question the kind of "truth" it offers us.

Science offers us facts, but facts divorced from values. But are not values also part of knowledge? And what of knowledge? Is not wisdom a part? What we now call "science" used to be called "natural philosophy," and does "philosophy" mean "love of knowledge"? According to John Maynard Keynes, Newton was not only the first great scientist, he was the last great mystic. Western civilization had a choice of which facet of this great man to follow, and the mystical lost out (Appleyard, p. 55).

Let us now, finally, recognize science for what it is. A refined and effective form of human reason, yes, but we must always keep in mind what Franklin noted, videlicet, that reason is defined by the person doing the reasoning. The Cartesian reasoning of Swift's A Modest Proposal appears to offer a practical solution to the problem of child poverty, and the "reasoning

[of the Nazis] made perfect sense except that it was evil, a technicality only detectable if you did not happen to be a Nazi" (Appleyard, p. 113). Science is extraordinarily effective, and to this it owes its success, but science is, at best, only capable of giving us *part* of the truth. There is a big difference between effectiveness and truth. The Cartesian ego -- this isolated, thinking entity, trapped in yet separate from the material world -- was central to the imaginative power of science, but it was a thoroughly artificial concept (Appleyard, p. 227). We are inextricably part of the material world -- "Man has no body distinct from his soul," as Blake put it (p. 80). The "God's eye view" which science relies on is impossible. It was a human convention, adopted because of its usefulness.

For these reasons, then, I assert that science is a convention, a specific choice among competing metaphysics rather than "the privileged road to the truth" (Appleyard, p. 227). Science is thus relativized, and we are free to choose another approach, one that will affirm our values and tell us more of what we need to know in order to live satisfying, meaningful lives.

Communitarianism

Myers believes the solution to the social problems he lays out in his book lies in what he calls "communitarianism." It is a movement away from the "me thinking" of radical individualism and toward the "we thinking" of human communities (Myers, p. 11). According to Myers, signs of this "'silent revolution' -- a renewal of civic life -- are springing up" "like crocuses blooming at winter's end" (p. 11). Communitarianism "offers a 'third way' -- an alternative to the individual civil libertarianism of the left and the economic libertarianism of the right" (Myers, p. 11). It wants a balance between "life, liberty, and the pursuit of property" and the "general welfare" of our Constitution (Myers, p. 223).

As members of a "centrist" movement (Myers, p. 189), communitarians advocate some things that had previously been called "family values" by the Right -- the traditional nuclear family, legally-binding marriage vows, "a return to modesty" (Myers, p. 33), sexual abstinence

for teens, values education and concern for the spirit -- as well as some traditionally liberal ideas, such as gun control and government restraints on the market.

The communitarian solution is self-admittedly a moderate one, aiming to "synthesize some of the best ideas from both camps" (Myers, p. 190), and, as such, has a strong appeal. Myers knows what we have lost, but his solution to getting it back is superficial, and unequal to the task. Before we sign on to Myers' communitarian ideal, we should consider that Myers does not sufficiently understand or even recognize the underlying causes of the "social recession" he illustrates so convincingly. It is the *severity* of the sickness of American society which most strikes the reader of The American Paradox. And a severe sickness often requires strong medicine.

When Myers talks of "concern for the spirit" and "our deep, ancestral 'need to belong'" (p. 32), what he is really talking about is "culture." He wants to restore to American culture some of the good things it had in the past, and this is commendable. But Myers talks of culture as if it is constituted by the pathetic ethnic food days at churches (Bloom, p. 193). Authentic culture is based on history -- that is a *real* history, "understood not as the investigation into man's deeds but as a dimension of reality, of man's being" (Bloom, p. 190). To use an expression popular among academics, culture isn't a warm fuzzy. It gives people their identity, values, and purpose for living. Consequently, it gives people reasons to die and kill for. The watered-down culture liberals like Myers talk about is not worth having, and certainly insufficient to solve our problems. Myers falls neatly into a category discussed by Bloom, i.e., those who want to eat their cake and have it:

> The question is whether reasonings really take the place of instincts, whether arguments about the value of tradition or roots can substitute for immediate passions, whether this whole interpretation is not just a reaction unequal to the task of stemming a tide of egalitarian, calculating individualism, which the critics themselves share, and the privileges of which they would be loath to renounce. When one hears newly divorced persons extolling the extended family, unaware of all the sacred bonds and ancestral tyranny that it required in order to exist, it is easy

> to see what they think is missing from their lives, but hard to believe they are aware of what they would have to sacrifice to achieve it. When one hears men and women proclaiming that they must preserve their *culture*, one cannot help wondering whether this artificial notion can really take the place of the God and country for which they once would have been willing to die. (p. 192)

Myer's naivete regarding authentic culture is most revealed when he advocates gun control. He doesn't seem to understand that, like them or not, the private ownership of guns is part of what makes us who we are, part of what makes us Americans. Although Myers is besmitten with the idea of cultural identity, he is unwilling to accept the bad things that authentic culture entails -- in this case, guns. Guns are part of the "real" history mentioned above, notwithstanding their role in "actual" American history.

Other countries certainly recognize that the love of guns is part of the American character. A Canadian Customs official, complaining to me about the large numbers of tourists who each year innocently attempt to bring guns across the border, characterized us as "gun-toting Americans." Guns are part of our sense of "real" history: our rebellion against England, our Founders' stated intention of maintaining power in the hands of the people rather than the government, our Jeffersonian self-reliance, and, of course, our myth of the American west. Guns may even be considered metaphors for our "equality" and "personal responsibility." To liberals like Myers, "self-defense" is the only justification for an American citizen to own a handgun, and this is the strawman he attacks; he either does not understand, or purposely ignores, the political, historical, and cultural contexts.

I don't need books to appreciate how ingrained the love of guns is in American culture -- I need only consider my neighbors (the kind of anecdote that Myers disdains). I often hear gunshots, and one neighbor has threatened on several occasions to shoot my dog. None of this makes me happy, of course, but I accept that the love of guns is part of our culture -- *my* culture.

With his naive reliance on reason and "good science" (p. 234) as the bases for his solutions, combined with his "freethinking" and "tolerance," Myers strikes me as just the sort of academic

liberal who damaged our culture in the first place, and it disgusts me to hear him and his ilk -- feminists like Sara McLanahan (p. 85) and educational "reformers" like Merrill Harmin (p. 338) -- whining about the results. Myers is fond of adducing Bible verses which are "surprisingly" supported by scientific evidence; let him consider "He that diggeth a pit shall fall into it; and whoso breaketh an hedge, a serpent shall bite him." My own naivete is the expectation that liberals like Myers would have the courage and integrity to reap the harvest they have sown.

Although Myers describes himself as a "tough-minded but tender-hearted social psychologist" and says "my sympathies are colored by my religious faith" (pp. xiv-xv), at root Myers seeks to base his values (read "social policies") on the doubtful expression, "well-established principles of social psychology." In other words, *science*.

Communitarianism is thus liable to the usual dangers associated with attempting to derive "values and meaning from within science" (Appleyard, p. 183), for values and meaning must have permanence, and therefore cannot be grounded in volatile propositions. Moreover, the people will not be charmed by communitarianism's facade of phony bland values, and will see through it. And, as I have already established, the people hate science and rationalism.

As they both adopt a "middle position" and attempt to derive "ethical values from the factual knowledge of science," Myer's communitarianism is similar to R. W. Sperry's "mentalist theory." And if the reader has never heard of the latter, he knows a third quality they are destined to share.

American Culture

Bloom writes, "A Charles de Gaulle or, for that matter, an Alexander Solzhenitsyn sees the United States as a mere aggregate of individuals, a dumping ground for the refuse from other places, devoted to consuming; in short, no culture" (p. 187). This statement has merit, but shouldn't be taken too literally. Despite having deteriorated over the past 40 years, American culture *does* exist, but it is degenerate and philistine.

American culture is cohesive and identifiable. Our culture is characterized by love of freedom, self-reliance, independence, individuality, empiricism, and practicality -- a "nation of tinkerers," Tocqueville noted. Although American culture is the product of many influences, the two primary ones remain England and Protestantism -- Puritanism in the North, Anglicanism in the South, historically. From the beginning until recently, America has been hostile to Catholicism and sects which contradicted the basic tenets of Protestantism, such as Mormonism. And, despite the myth, American society has not generally welcomed immigrants with open arms. Though they may have originally come from other countries, it was *Americans* who built this one; white, black, Chinese, Hispanic, Slav, Swede worked along side one another other to mine our coal, lay our railroad tracks, produce our steel, and build our cities. Many times, America has shown itself able to successfully wage war *as a country*. And as for the "two cultures of North and South," at this point in time we may say "There may have been a little bit a' fightin' amongst ourselves, but you outside people best leave us alone" (Daniels, DiGregorio, Edwards, Hayward).

Historically, immigrants to America have been assimilated into the existing culture more than they have changed it. The first generation may set up a close-knit Italian neighborhood and attempt to preserve the language and customs of the "Old Country," but very little is usually transmitted beyond the second generation. American public schools are particularly effective at assisting this melting-pot process. Immigrants soon learn that if they are to succeed in America, they must learn its language and customs. But even if they don't, it is much harder to avoid adapting to the American economic system, which is itself a cultural product. Despite the agenda of "multiculturalism" which has been so heavily promoted recently, America is still overwhelmingly a Protestant, English-speaking country, with its own customs, holidays, values, and, yes, sense of "real" history, though this latter has greatly diminished over the last 40 years.

Other countries have no trouble identifying American culture. Baywatch is piped into televisions in Melbourne and Swartzenegger movies play in theaters on the Champs-Elysees. Some countries, such as Canada, Saudi Arabia and France, perceive American culture as a major threat, and actively resist its influence. To see this, one merely has to look at today's headlines:

Thursday, Jan. 25, 2001

"Titanic" Craze Grips Afghans, Taliban Not Amused

KABUL (Reuters) - Amid the privation, destruction and austere Islamic edicts of Afghanistan, the capital's young men have been lining up for haircuts to look like the hero of the movie "Titanic."

The ruling Taliban, intent on creating the world's purest Islamic state and contemptuous of almost everything from the West, are not amused.

The religious police, who enforce an interpretation of Islam that includes a ban on shaving, have detained dozens of barbers for trimming the hair of the capital's youth in the "Titanic" style, witnesses said.

"We don't know for sure the precise number of the arrested people, but reportedly they exceed 30 and have been in the jail for over a week now for giving a 'Titanic' hair style," said one barber, who declined to be identified.

The "Titanic" hair style leaves the fringe untrimmed and the back shortly cropped in emulation of the movie's star, Leonardo DiCaprio.

"The religious police have warned us against the use of Titanic and other Western hair fashions," another barber said.

Three years after the film's release, it has finally swept into Kabul despite a Taliban ban on music, cinema and television.

The epic tale of love and disaster has captivated Afghans, who are seeking an escape from their own disaster -- a Russian invasion in 1979 followed by civil war that has dragged on inconclusively for more than a decade.

The Titanic name is attached to anything an Afghan merchant can sell: cosmetics, clothes, footware, wedding cakes and vehicles.

Officials of the Taliban religious police, formally known as the Ministry of Prevention of Vice and Promotion of Virtue, declined to comment to Reuters about the recent arrests, merely insisting that Afghans must not mimic Western ways.
(Copyright Reuters Limited 2001)

The Afghans are engaged in a culture war, and it is absurd to suggest that their enemy doesn't exist. America has a culture, but one badly in need of restoration. The next section contains a real solution which, I believe, will go a long way toward accomplishing this restoration.

The Separation of Church and State

The question is, if not communitarianism, what can restore our culture? Aside from the obvious benefits, this restoration is important because I contend that the ideal teacher cannot thrive in the soil of present American society. Like Myers, I look to the past, not only to take from it what was best and reissue it in the present (with all the authenticity that attends reissues), but for wisdom and knowledge. Like Voltaire, I believe the purpose of history is "the search for ideals useful in controlling the future" (Torrey, p. 268).

A common theme in Western literature is the degeneration of man. It is found in the Bible, Lucretius, Horace, Dante, Blake -- even in the passages from Rousseau and Nietzsche quoted above. Contrary to the prevailing myth, I do not consider the people of today wiser or more enlightened than those of the past, and I agree with Bloom that there are no good reasons to prefer the study of the twentieth century to that of others.

There was no "religious freedom" as we know it in the 13 original American colonies. The closest was the "religious tolerance" of Pennsylvania and Rhode Island. And despite their sectarian differences, all the colonies shared the general values and world-view of Protestantism, and saw the Roman Catholic Church as their common, insidious enemy. This nondenominational Protestantism continued to characterize our country as it grew, and for all intents and purposes, was our state religion. William McGuffy's readers, one title of which was, "Religion, the Only Basis of Society," "sold 122 million copies and were read by 4 in 5 schoolchildren during the 1800s and early 1900s" (Myers, p. 237). During the nineteenth century, the women of American Protestant churches were the foot-soldiers in the battles to

institute many of the social reforms that century witnessed. Like the phrase "All men are created equal," it took our country a long time to truly understand and implement the "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof" in our First Amendment.

As I have shown, Jefferson did not accomplish a "separation of church and state"; though it took a while, in the end he overthrew a state religion based on revelation and established in its place the religion of rationalism. Understanding this is the key to the solution by which our society may be restored. He was so proud of his "accomplishment" that he even had it inscribed on his tombstone. We may soon have it on ours.

Rationalism replaced the religion of our ancestors, and produced science, the single most important cause of our "social recession." Science sapped our energy, weakened our spirits and stripped our lives of meaning and purpose. It tells us everything except what we need to know to live. Mrs. Einstein expressed much when she said relativity was "'not necessary for my happiness.' We might ask: for what, then, *is* it necessary?" (Appleyard, p. 35).

We cannot get rid of science, but we can tame it. The best way to do this is by doing something about the hegemony of rationalism. With my solution, I am what Myers would call an "extremist." Jefferson overthrew the religion of our forbears, which he called "an opinion," and replaced it with "the religion of an elite, of great gentlemen" like himself (Lippmann, p. 56). In view of the severe cultural damage this has caused, I propose we similarly overthrow Jefferson's destructive state religion in favor of one which is more naturally, culturally, and historically suited to us and which better serves our basic human needs. I propose reinstituting the nondenominational Protestantism which characterized the United States for most of its history. Although it is presently in a very weakened state, I believe it may still be revitalized.

A state religion of nondenominational Protestantism would allow the government to take a stand on the authentic religious beliefs and values historically held by the majority of the

American people, and thus be more of the proper "authoritative element" discussed above. Such a state religion would have the legitimate authority and power to take an effective moral stand against the profit-driven market and media forces which are destroying what was good in American culture. A national religion could stand up to Hollywood, the Music Industry, Nintendo, MTV and all the other garbage producers that are polluting our culture (and others' as well). But, most importantly, a national religion will have the power and moral authority to check the unrestrained freedom which science continues to exercise.

As things exist presently, the efforts of individual churches are condemned to small successes; the enemies they are up against are too powerful and too many. To borrow an expression from Myers, they are merely swatting mosquitoes when the real task is to drain the swamp. But if America's Protestant churches could put aside their provincial pride and adolescent rebelliousness, they could join together, pool their resources, and become a united front against the evil at work in this country, having the authority of the state behind them. The petty theological squabbles which created this confusing array of fragmented denominations are now, thanks to science, largely moot points. Most Protestant sects espouse the same basic Christian principles. What keeps them apart is adolescent rebelliousness and the identity and pride they have in their particular denomination. They forget that Martin Luther never intended, and, indeed, did not want, the Church to break apart into factions, nor did Wesley want to separate from the Church of England.

Myers enthusiastically points to high-level ecumenical meetings in the United States and the United Nations, and the "common ground" results these meetings produced (pp. 266-267). For example, the 1993 Parliament of the World's Religion issued a "global ethic" (p. 266). Then there was the "World Faiths and Development Dialogue" and the "Call to the Common Ground for the Common Good" (p. 267). To all of which I say, Who cares? How are the opinions of a diverse group of theologians of any relevance at all to the average American? Most of us aren't

even aware that these meetings take place. And as for the results which emerge from them, to what extent are they compelling? Unless they are forced upon us -- which some no doubt wish to do -- these ecumenical meetings are irrelevant. As Richard Dawkins asked, "If all the achievements of theologians were wiped out tomorrow, would anyone notice the smallest difference?" (Quoted by Myers, p. 266).

There has never existed a society which lacked an official religion. Some religions require only lip service be paid to the gods, others human sacrifice. But they all fulfill an array of basic psychological needs. All except, of course, rationalism. Religion can be a dangerous thing, but so is scientism and rationalism. It was not religion which created Carnegie's steel mills, Stalin's Soviet Union, Hitler's Germany, or America's "social recession." But in this age of science and information, there is a much better chance of establishing Boswell's "decent system of mild Christianity" (Tillotson et al., p. 9) than in more "superstitious" times. And our system of checks and balances would serve to curb the excesses religions are prone to. Let us, finally, strip the scientist of his title of priest, and restore to our real priests the power and authority due them from their culture.

CHAPTER IV

THE TEACHER OF THE FUTURE

A state religion of the kind discussed above will go a long way towards restoring our society and mitigating the "social recession" Myers discusses. Unlike Myers' communitarianism, which would have rightly been called "a godless system" by our forebears, on account of its rationalism, tolerance, and catholicism, a state religion of nondenominational Protestantism would restore traditional time-tested values to America, with God as their source -- a far more compelling sanction than the social psychological principles Myers appeals to. Such a solution would lack the contriving artifice of social engineers like Myers, and would simply be a reinforcement and legitimization of what already inheres in our culture.

With a state religion, values education -- the most important kind -- would no longer be debated in schools; it would receive the primary emphasis, as it did in the days of the McGuffy readers. And these values would be authentically *American* values, and have the sanction of not only community, but country, and -- unlike the sandcastle virtues of today's "character education" -- God, not rational propositions.

Like the Poet, when it came to learning anything of value, I usually left by the same door I came in. Bad enough when the door leads to a university classroom, but much worse in a public elementary or secondary school. I once asked a Christian priest which was preferable, a wicked Christian or a virtuous atheist, and he responded with the former, because, according to him, "the virtuous atheist doesn't need God." I believe this idea is important to keep in mind during the present debate of "religious education" versus "character education."

With a state religion in place, Christian priests may be more secure; they won't have to pander to their congregations in order to keep their jobs. Indeed, they will be freer to pursue their vocation, part of which is to exhort their congregations to act virtuously and to occasionally upbraid them. Similarly, our ideal teacher will be freer to perform *his* vocation, without the constraining problems inherent to teaching in a democracy discussed by Plato above -- a disturbing example of which I recently witnessed when I heard a high school principal equate his school to a business, calling the parents of his students "customers" and "clients." Ideally, our teacher of the future will be supported by the religious establishment when he occasionally displeases students or parents, because it will understand that not all the paths to wisdom are straight, or, in the vulgar, "you can't make an omlet without breaking some eggs."

I have thus laid the foundations for quality education in America, and thereby prepared the soil for our ideal teacher of the future. For he understands that his most important job is to represent, model and teach the traditional virtues of his culture, and he may now do so without fear. Indeed, it will be demanded of him.

The Good Tutor

So, to use Rousseau's words, what are the characteristics of our "good tutor?" First, the ability to teach. This should be obvious, but it is not to many of our politicians and those in America's educational hierarchy. They think that success in formal education and scholarly aptitude are prerequisites for a good teacher. If this were true "college teachers would be the

very best," but anyone who has been to college knows this is not the case ("Pennsylvania trying to politicize education"). According to their reasoning Isaac Newton should have been a great teacher, but he goes down in history as one of the worst. And I have worked alongside excellent teachers who never attended college. This sorry situation reminds me of an Ashleigh Brilliant aphorism: "Now that everybody's educated, we have one hell of a dumb country." The people know this, as did William Buckley when he said, "I'd rather be ruled by the first one hundred names in the Boston phonebook than by the entire faculty of Harvard."

The bottom line is, regarding teaching, you either can do it or you can't. So why does the state force talented, proven, experienced teachers who hold degrees from accredited colleges to take additional college courses and certification tests? Yet another case of the Emperor's New Clothes; everyone accepts this "training" as necessary, but it isn't. It is a racket which makes a lot of people rich, who profit off the dreams of aspiring teachers. This "teacher certification" system obstructs the free flow of labor and is as repressive and unfair as the French guild system which Turgot abolished, and should suffer the same fate.

Some of the greatest Americans never graduated from college, passed certification tests or even completed high school. Benjamin Franklin graduated from the "poor man's college," i.e. the printing shop, to become a great writer, inventor, and statesman, among other things. Walt Whitman, America's most influential poet, never completed past sixth grade. Abraham Lincoln, a successful lawyer, and arguably our greatest president, never attended law school. Jimi Hendrix, our greatest rock guitarist, never went to music school, nor could he read music. And, though we don't know their names, owing to the lack of respect we accord them, many of this country's greatest teachers never saw the inside of a college classroom. And could we imagine any of these great souls taking time out of their important lives to subordinate themselves to professional scholars -- mere "useful tools" according to Nietzsche -- or submit their profoundly unstandard minds to standardized tests, the products of standardized men, who want to force

others to think like them, i.e., conventionally? William Blake, one of history's greatest poets and artists, who suffered much at the hands of this type of person, whom he called "the devouring," wrote "Thank God I never was sent to school/To be flogd into following the Style of a Fool" (Tillotson et al., p. 1490).

Ironically, it appears that America's educational policy makers are themselves so poorly educated that they haven't read Rousseau (who, incidentally, never completed high school), who repeatedly warns against exposing children to academic instruction until they have acquired enough reason to handle it, for today we have American children "flunking" kindergarten (D. Campbell, personal communication, January, 2001).

Our ideal teacher understands that standardized tests create standardized people. Why should we want our children to be like those of Japan or Germany? (D. Campbell, personal communication, January, 2001). We want them to be *American*, and Americans value diversity (D. Campbell, personal communication, January, 2001), and derive in large part from a country characterized by eccentricity and "humorousness." Writing to a friend about England, Voltaire noted, "Reason is free here and walks her own way, hippocondriaks especially are well come. No manner of living appears strange; we have men who walk six miles a day for their health, feed upon roots, never taste flesh, wear a coat in winter thinner than y^{r} ladies do in the hottest days" (Tillotson et al., p. 13). Like England, America has historically produced an abundance of such unusual characters, as noted by Tocqueville, and our country is much the better for it. As I have repeatedly said, reason is defined by the person doing the reasoning, so why would we want our young people, or, indeed, Americans of any age, being forced to think like the pedantic and conventional types who write these standardized tests? Creative people have always recognized this attempt at conformity by schools and hated them for it (D. Campbell, personal communication, January, 2001). One need only consider the school experiences of Edison, Churchill, and Einstein.

A state religion and the religious education it would impose will help establish respect between students and for their teacher, thus making it easier for the teacher to use some of the best teaching methods. As stated above, today's students expect -- indeed, *demand* -- to know the reasons behind what a teacher asks them to do. This sense of entitlement was explained as a particular symptom of the fact that a democracy by its very nature creates an environment in which a teacher is pressured to pander to his students, who in turn despise him. The teacher feels pressure to yield to students' demands to let the cat out of the bag prematurely. He is thus discouraged from utilizing one of the best methods of teaching, which involves leading the students blindly, as it were, towards a moment of "enlightenment." This technique was memorably demonstrated in the film The Karate Kid, when Mr. Miyagi guided Ralph Macchio's character in the fine art of polishing cars: "wax on, wax off, wax on, wax off . . .". This technique involves active learning, suspense, and a surprise discovery which may be the better remembered by virtue of the process by which it was arrived.

But with the support of the state religion, and the new respect it will confer upon our teacher of the future, this antiproductive and unnatural situation will be corrected. Students will be led to understand that, although they may have a right to question their teacher, they may not have earned a right to an answer.

The Honest Man

To better show what our ideal teacher of the future is, I will juxtapose him against what he is not. In this way, his lineaments may be discerned with less risk of boring the reader with preachiness.

I used to wonder why the most famous story associated with Diogenes of Sinope seemed to be his walking in daylight with a lantern before him looking for "an honest man." This anecdote never struck me as especially interesting, especially when compared with the others associated with this unusual man. For example, when Diogenes was "lying in the sun" and was approached

by Alexander the Great, who asked him if there was anything he wanted, and Diogenes replied, "Yes, stand a little out of my sun" (Plutarch, p. 249). Diogenes lived in a huge clay pot, rolled naked in hot sand in summer, embraced snow-covered statues in winter, masturbated in public, called athletes "creatures of pork and beef," politicians "lackeys of the mob," the great Theater of Dionysos a "peep-show for fools," and mathematics, astronomy, music and all intellectual studies a waste of time (Amos & Lang, p. 201). Compared to these incidents, the one about the lantern in daylight seemed to me uninteresting, but as I continued to read historically-determined relics, this particular story seemed to be mentioned almost every time with Diogenes' name, while the other seemingly more interesting ones were not.

This was, however, when I was a young man, with much more familiarity with books than with the world. That changed after I entered the teaching profession. I had postponed doing this until I felt I had achieved sufficient education, but was mistaken, for even now I lack enough to teach in a public high school. Regardless, my years as schoolmaster provided me with much human, as opposed to bookish, contact; daily interactions with students, of course, but also with other teachers, administrators, and, occasionally, parents. After this experience of the world I came to appreciate the importance of the point Diogenes was trying to make.

At one school where I taught, the Headmaster was charming, personable, affable, charismatic, and well-educated. He had a compelling vision and a philosophy of education somewhat similar to my own. He considered himself a "man on a mission" to help his students and treated his teachers as tools toward that end. He talked incomprehensibly of half-eaten onions in hell, but more so of "turning lemons into lemonade." He did the latter when, in a stroke of genius, he took the high turnover rate among his faculty and transformed it into a selling point for the school -- fresh, young, energetic teachers every year! A shrewd manipulator of persons, this politically-expedient Machiavel once informed his students with a straight-face, "I say what I mean, and mean what I say." What he lacked as a teacher, he made up for as

salesman. He was fastidiously concerned with all appearances relating to the school, but found reality tiresome. And though these were separated by a considerable gulf, at some point he had lost the ability to distinguish between them, the unfortunate side-effect of being an inveterate -- or, should I say, invertebrate -- liar, as this fellow had no backbone when it came to issues of integrity or loyalty.

His second-in-command, the Dean of Faculty, held little power, most remaining concentrated in the person of the Headmaster, but this obsequious and ambitious little man exercised what little he had in a tight-lipped approach to the execution of his duties. He considered himself a master educator, and was pleased to share with others unsolicited suggestions intended to improve their teaching. And though not as well-educated or facile a liar as his superior, he had enough politically skill and capacity to reconcile injustice to see his ambition rewarded by being appointed Headmaster when the latter retired to luxury.

The Conventional Pedant

The conventional pedant often makes an effective, though not necessarily good, teacher, but this type poses a serious obstacle and threat to our ideal teacher of the future if she holds a position of authority over him, which, unfortunately, is more the rule than the exception. The conventional pedant values lesson plans very highly, and will force our teacher to waste his time writing them every week. This type puts a lot of energy into "developing curriculum," i.e., choosing textbooks and the topics which are to be covered -- to wit, the nuts and bolts of mere subject matter. These people rigidly adhere to arbitrary bureaucratic categories, and are typically narrowly-educated. As indicated above, this type is usually very free with advice on how to teach. They believe understanding and intelligence can be quantified, and in the universals of grades and percents. They arbitrarily assign "point values" and later defend them as though they were carved on stone tablets. They think they have achieved success if a student obtains a high score on a standardized test, and will eagerly "teach for the test" if given the chance. For this

type, digression is unacceptable, and they strictly enforce grammatical rules without understanding where language comes from, and emphasize form over content.

But, above all, the conventional pedant loves tests. Tests appeal to our native American empiricism, and to the type that wants to quantify everything -- and thinks that everything is quantifiable.

Tests are, of course, artificial. David Campbell writes:

> Nowhere in the real world do we have four to five possible answers to guess from, the way standardized tests are constructed. The few teachers I've had to fail and remove over the years all had over 3.0 grade averages. Some of those who struggled to achieve good grades have been among the very best. And the NTE examinations have kept from teaching many of the most gifted. If we go this route, we shall soon see the results: Young people who cannot really do much of anything except take tests. ("Pennsylvania trying to politicize education," 2000)

I have already discussed ancient Greek culture's contribution to the American conception of the teacher. I will now point to one Greek in particular to whom the conventional pedant owes much. Robert Pirsig realized this when he was reading Aristotle's Rhetoric, which early on states, "Rhetoric is an art, because it can be reduced to a rational system of order" (Quoted by Pirsig, p. 324). In view of what has been said, the absurdity of this statement should be apparent. Pirsig characterizes it as "an asshole statement" (p. 324). As he read on, Aristotle struck Pirsig as the prototypical pedant:

> Rhetoric can be subdivided into particular proofs and topics on the one hand and common proofs on the other. The particular proofs can be subdivided into methods of proof and kinds of proof. The methods of proofs are the artificial proofs and the inartificial proofs. Of the artificial proofs there are ethical proofs, emotional proofs and logical proofs. Of the ethical proofs there are practical wisdom, virtue and good will. The particular methods employing artificial proofs of the ethical kind involving good will require a knowledge of the emotions, and for those who have forgotten what they are, Aristotle provides a list. They are anger, slight (subdivisible into contempt, spite and insolence), mildness, love or friendship, fear, confidence, shame, shamelessness, favor, benevolence, pity, virtuous indignation, envy, emulation and contempt. (p. 325)

Pirsig's alter-ego Phaedrus was convinced that Aristotle was the originator of this "style of discourse" (p. 325). Not just in The Rhetoric, but in his other books, Aristotle goes on like this

page after page, "like some third-rate technical instructor, naming everything, showing the relationships among the things named, cleverly inventing an occasional new relationship among the things named, and then waiting for the bell so he can get on to repeat the lecture for the next class" (Pirsig, p. 325).

Phaedrus rightly questioned,

> Did Aristotle really think his students would be better rhetoricians for having learned all these endless names and relationships? And if not, did he really think he was teaching rhetoric? Phaedrus thought that he really did. There was nothing in his style to indicate that Aristotle was ever one to question Aristotle. Phaedrus saw Aristotle as tremendously satisfied with this neat little stunt of naming and classifying everything. His world began and ended with this stunt. The reason why, if he were not more than two thousand years dead, he would have gladly rubbed him out is that he saw him as a prototype for the many millions of self-satisfied and truly ignorant teachers throughout history who have smugly and callously killed the creative spirit of their students with this dumb ritual of analysis, this blind, rote, eternal naming of things. Walk into any of a hundred thousand classrooms today and hear the teachers divide and subdivide and interrelate and establish 'principles' and study 'methods' and what you will hear is the ghost of Aristotle speaking down through the centuries -- the desiccating lifeless voice of dualistic reason. (p. 325-326)

Our ideal teacher of the future has no trouble working alongside the conventional pedant, and, moreover, recognizes that this type is necessary to good education. But our "noble soul" -- the *true* "master educator" -- will never subordinate himself to her rule.

The Education of our Ideal Teacher

The education of our teacher will be the traditional liberal education discussed above. This will give him, among other things, a knowledge of history, human nature, the ability to see things from different perspectives -- it will, in a word, free his mind. The importance and utility of these things to teaching are obvious and cannot be overemphasized. A liberal education is an ennobling influence which will put our teacher in contact with the "giants who formed this world" (Blake, p. 84), and enter him into the genius and spirit of these great men. This may better prepare him to transmit the spark of knowledge, from mind to mind, as it were, to the rare student in whom "the light of understanding so kindled will then feed itself" (Plato quoted by

Lee, p. xxxix). And if our teacher is fortunate enough to have been gifted with a philosophic nature, such an education will nourish it; as stated above, the philosophic disposition is a highly-prized characteristic of our ideal teacher (though not a necessary one). For not only will a philosopher know what to say to a student, he will know what to judiciously withhold.

Henry Fielding, much the philosopher himself, expressed the ideal of education in Tom Jones by having Squire Allworthy choose as tutors for Tom a cleric and a philosopher. Although Rev. Thwackum and Mr. Square are flawed, indeed, execrable, characters, Fielding uses them as *false* examples in order to help us discern the *true* ones, similar to what I have done in this essay. Regardless of their personal traits, by choosing them in the first place Fielding shows the primary importance of religion and philosophy to education. Like Swift, Fielding subscribed to the traditional order and the classical education, but he tempered his Augustan conservatism with Christian humanism, for lack of a better term (which was why he was so provoked by Richardson's Pamela with its alleged hypocrisy, double standard and reductionist "sham" morality).

Only after attaining a traditional liberal education will our ideal teacher be allowed to pursue a specialty. By then he will understand what was said of specialization above, and will always prefer to consider himself a "generalist."

Finally, our tutor will not be allowed to work during the years he spends pursuing a liberal education. For, as J. S. Mill noted, "the capacity for the nobler feelings" and the love of learning "is in most natures a very tender plant, easily killed" by the world (pp. 12-13), and we do not wish our "noble soul" to be corrupted during this important stage in his development.

The Need to Belong

Our ideal teacher does not pretend that "All men are created equal," nor does he dispute Mill's distinction between higher and lower faculties. He does, however, value the diverse and

manifold abilities and inclinations of man, agreeing with Hamlet, "What a piece of work is a man, how noble in reason, how infinite in faculties . . .".

Our teacher understands that there are many different types of men, with many different kinds of intelligence, interests, desires, and ambitions, and that all this is necessary and natural. He will respect the English student and the engineering student, the theatre student and the math student, the music student and the home economics student, the history student and the autobody repair student, the gifted student and the learning-disabled student. He may, however, secretly confer special treatment to the philosophy student, for reasons which I hope at this point should be clear to the reader. At all times our teacher of the future will attempt to foster a sense of brotherhood and exclusivity among the students of his different classes, the kind that we see both among students in gifted programs and over-the-road truckers. This sense of pride and belonging -- the feeling that one is among others like oneself -- is a natural right of all students, but one they have long been deprived of by American public schools.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

The time for half-measures is over. Myers writes, "Informed people argue causes and solutions, but they no longer dispute the facts" (p. 235). I have diagnosed the causes of Myers' "social recession" and outlined the treatment by which we may cure it. Not swatting mosquitoes, but draining the swamp. If my measures are followed, there will be an alleviation of many of the social ills presently suffered by America, and the ground will be prepared for the ideal teacher of the future, who will be the most effective agent for restoring American society. He will effectively transmit American cultural history and values to the citizens of the future. For the last 40 years American public schools have failed to do this, and we now observe "the whole grand structure of past achievements" collapsing into ruin (H. Richard Niebuhr quoted by Myers, p. 237).

Rousseau said the project of education was "to turn the boy into a man." As a society, do we want to create "herd animal" specialists or men? Do we want to produce good test takers or good citizens?

Many of the ideas in Emile were present in earlier writers, including Montaigne and Locke, but it was Rousseau's eloquence which compelled people to finally listen. Although I am confident in the truth and validity of my argument, I fear I may have lacked sufficient eloquence. My hope, however, is that a great man like those discussed in this essay may one day stumble across this little treatise, and use it to accomplish what I could not.

Finis.

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